The Wright Line

A Legacy of American Service

Written by:

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THE WRIGHT LINE

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Dedication

For my children —

that you may know where your courage, your faith,

and your stubbornness were born.

You carry the blood of soldiers, teachers, sheriffs, farmers, and dreamers.

When the wind moves across the mountains,

it carries their names — and now, yours.

"We are the sum of every life that refused to quit."

— From the family letters of Major J. Scott, 1893

PROLOGUE

The Line Begins in Mud

The first Wright I ever met was a ghost on microfilm: Benjamin Franklin Wright, born April 2, 1835, in Campbell County, Tennessee, dead July 10, 1864, in a swamp outside Duvall's Bluff, Arkansas. He never saw his son. He never saw the end of the war. All that survived him was a pension jacket, a widow's $8 a month, and a bloodline that refused to quit.

That refusal is the spine of this book.

From Valley Forge to Lookout Mountain, from Piqua to Libby Prison, from a sheriff gunned down in Ball Flats to a Dust Bowl bride who carried her children across three states in a Model T—these are not stories of glory. They are stories of survival.

Henry Clay Harman ate rats for four months in Libby Prison and came home to plant orchards in Kansas.

James Lenox Gaff and David Kilgore bled together in the fog at Germantown, then sent their daughters west on the same frontier road.

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Sixty-eight names. Ten wars. One flame.

I started with a single date—April 2, 1835—and followed it through NARA microfilm, pension jackets, courthouse ledgers, and family letters until it burned into my own hand. Every fact is cited, photographed, and locked. Nothing is invented. Nothing is lost.

The wind that moves across the mountains today carries the smoke of Piqua, the frost of Valley Forge, the iron of Libby Prison. It is Wright wind, and it did not blow by accident.

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Preface

Every family carries a story — some written in fading ink, others passed down in quiet conversation. The Wright Line began as my effort to bring those stories together, to gather what time had scattered. What started as a simple family tree became a journey through centuries of courage, hardship, and faith.

Within these pages live the lives of our ancestors: pioneers who crossed frontiers, soldiers who fought for freedom, and families who built homes on the edge of wilderness. From Revolutionary War encampments and Civil War battlefields to mining camps in the Rockies and the skies of World War II, the Wrights, Scotts, Lecomptes, and Kilgores lived out the American story in their own distinct way — through work, perseverance, and devotion to family.

This book is more than a record of names and dates. It is a restoration of memory — the voices of those who came before us, drawn from letters, oral histories, pension files, newspaper archives, and the recollections of those who still remember. Each chapter combines fact and feeling, history and humanity, preserving not just the events of the past but the spirit that shaped them.

I have tried to tell these stories as honestly as possible, guided by both documentation and the unbroken thread of family truth. For every ancestor remembered here, there are countless others whose names are lost but whose sacrifices endure through us.

May this book serve as a reminder to future generations that our story — The Wright Line — was written not in stone, but in the living hearts of those who refused to be forgotten.

— Compiled by Bobby Espinoza

2025

Chapter 1:

The Dying Soldier: Benjamin Franklin Wright

(1835–1864)

"He never saw the mountains his sons would climb."

In the spring light of April 2, 1835, a boy was born in Campbell County, Tennessee, where the hills fold like green waves and the creeks sing their way toward the Cumberland. His name was Benjamin Franklin Wright, and though no one could have known it then, the Civil War would take him before he reached his thirty-fifth year.

Benjamin grew up in a nation pulling itself apart — whispers of secession already in the air before he turned twenty. His parents raised him in the rhythms of the Tennessee frontier: cornfields, rifles, and Sunday hymns. By 1850, he was living in Warren County, Missouri, a place where Union loyalty met Southern sympathy across the same dinner table. Ten years

later, the census caught him in Ft. Osage Township, Jackson County, Missouri, working near Sibley, a river town perched on the edge of the American divide.

There he met Martha Jane Howe, daughter of William Maricy Howe, and on November 26, 1861, as cannon fire echoed across the Mississippi Valley, the two were married in Independence, Missouri. Their world was barely stitched together when war tore it apart.

The Enlistment

In 1862, Benjamin enlisted in the 11th Missouri Cavalry, Company C, for volunteer service in the Union Army. His enlistment record lists him simply:

"Benjamin F. Wright — age 27, farmer, born Tennessee."

He left behind a young wife and an uncertain farm to ride with men from Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa — rough riders all, called to keep the peace in a state at war with itself.

By May 1863, he was still present at muster roll. The reports from his company note quiet consistency: "present," "present," "present." He was a man who did his duty without complaint.

Then came Arkansas — the malaria, the mud, and the slow death that claimed more soldiers than bullets ever could.

The Slow Death at Duvall's Bluff

In early 1864, Benjamin's name appeared on the hospital register at Rolla, Missouri. The diagnosis: chronic diarrhea, the old soldier's curse — dehydration, infection, exhaustion. By July 10, 1864, he was dead at Duvall's Bluff, Arkansas, a Union supply base on the White River.

He never saw the end of the war.

He never saw the son who would carry his name into the next century.

He was thirty-four years old.

His widow, Martha, filed for a pension in April 1870, stating simply that he "died in the service of the United States." The paperwork from the National Archives (M392 Roll 16) lists no cause but his body's failure. Yet his death was as much a sacrifice as any on the battlefield.

The Widow and the Promise

Martha Jane Howe Wright raised their child — Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr. — alone in Missouri. She remarried, survived, and lived long enough to see the family line push west toward Colorado. Her son, the boy Benjamin never met, would carry the Wright name into the Rockies, raise sons of his own, and build a life that outlasted war.

Through him, the dying soldier of Duvall's Bluff lived on — in ranch hands, ski coaches, peach growers, and storytellers. His bloodline would one day lead to Paul Wesley Wright, founder of NCAA skiing, and to Judith Arlene Wright, born in Texas dust a century later.

Legacy

When you walk the grounds of an old cemetery in Johnson County, Kansas, the name "Benjamin F. Wright" may still whisper from a weathered stone. There's no grand statue, no brass plaque. Just the record:

Private → Sergeant, 11th Missouri Cavalry, Died July 10, 1864, Duvall's Bluff, Arkansas.

But that's enough. His sacrifice set the foundation for generations that followed — a family that turned the mud of war into the soil of renewal.

He was not the general or the hero in bronze, but the quiet soldier whose endurance gave rise to the mountains his descendants would climb.

Every time you smell pine and river water, every time a Wright builds or teaches or coaches, it is Benjamin Franklin Wright — still present at muster, still doing his duty.

Figure 1.

Benjamin Franklin Wright

Figure 2.

Martha Jane (Howe) Wright with son, Benjamin Franklin Wright, Jr.

Family Line Connection:

The legacy of Benjamin Franklin Wright (1835–1869) lived on through his son, Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr., born in the years of Reconstruction. Though the father's life ended amid the ruins of war, his name and spirit endured, guiding the next generation into a nation being rebuilt from ashes.

Interlude:

John Wesley Wright (1868–1907)

The Lost Son of Kansas

Born June 16, 1868, in Olathe, Johnson County, Kansas, John Wesley Wright was the youngest surviving child of Benjamin Franklin Wright (1835–1869) and Martha Jane Howe (1845–1914).

After his father's early death, John remained in Olathe with his mother, appearing in the 1870 Census as "Pettegrew," reflecting his mother's remarriage. The 1875 Kansas State Census lists him still in Olathe, age 6, and by 1880, age 12, he was recorded as a stepson residing on Elm Street, again under the Pettegrew household.

On November 17, 1888, in Johnson County, Kansas, John married Mary Adeline Rennick (1870–1932). A second marriage record circa 1889 further supports this union. The couple settled in Olathe, where John worked as a harness maker—his trade noted in both the 1895 Kansas Census and 1900 U.S. Census, which locate the family in McCamish Township, Johnson County.

By the mid-1890s, John was a partner in the business Wright & Pettegrew, a harness-making shop referenced in an August 10, 1893 Spring Hill, Kansas newspaper item.

John's later years were marked by declining health; suffering from tuberculosis, he relocated to Eagle Point, Jackson County, Oregon, where he died on March 12, 1907, at age 38. He was buried in Central Point Cemetery, Central Point, Oregon.

Occupations: Harness maker; proprietor, Wright & Pettegrew (Spring Hill, Kansas).

Military record: Listed on a pension record (1896) as a minor dependent of his father, suggesting continued family ties to Civil War benefits.

Residence timeline:

1870 – Olathe, Johnson Co., KS (listed as Pettegrew)

1875 – Olathe, Johnson Co., KS

1880 – Olathe, Johnson Co., KS (Elm Street)

1895 – Olathe, Johnson Co., KS (Harness maker)

1900 – McCamish, Johnson Co., KS

1907 – Eagle Point, Jackson Co., OR (death)

Burial: Central Point Cemetery, Jackson County, Oregon

(Find A Grave memorial listed)

Figure 3.

John Wesley and Mary Adeline (Rennick) Wright with Mamie Wright

Family Line Connection

John Wesley Wright's life, though brief, stands as a quiet echo of his father's legacy—a craftsman's resilience bound to the frontier spirit. While his brother Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr. carried the Wright line west into Colorado, John's path ended in Oregon, another branch of the same pioneer drive that pushed their family ever forward.

The sons of Benjamin Franklin Wright and Martha Jane Howe represented the first post–Civil War generation of Wrights born into a changing America—one rebuilding itself, state by state, homestead by homestead. Through trade, movement, and endurance, they laid the foundation for the next chapter of the family's story: Paul Wesley Wright, grandson of the soldier who never came home, and the man who would anchor the Wright name in the mountains of Colorado

CHAPTER 2:

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WRIGHT JR. (1863–1945)

The Missouri Pioneer

When the guns fell silent in 1865, the Wright family name nearly disappeared with the sound.

Sergeant Benjamin Franklin Wright, who had ridden with the 11th Missouri Cavalry, lay buried near Duvall's Bluff, Arkansas — one more soldier lost to disease and exhaustion in a war that swallowed thousands. Back in Jackson County, Missouri, his nineteen-year-old widow, Martha Jane Howe, was left holding an infant son who would never know his father. His name was Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr., and through him the Wright line would survive.

He was born in the last winter of the war — 1863, in Missouri, to a young mother who refused to give up. The country was broken and bitter, the border states torn between blue and gray. For the first years of his life, Martha raised her boy among the ashes of Independence, a town that had seen raids, bushwhackers, and

burned-out farms. Their household was one of widows, soldiers' wives, and women learning to survive in a new world.

By the time Benjamin Jr. was a teenager, the West was calling. Railroads were pushing across Kansas. Homesteads were opening in Colorado Territory. Martha packed up what little she had and followed that horizon, her son learning to drive wagons and work the land. By the 1880s, Benjamin was a young man with calloused hands, a quiet temperament, and a drive to make his own way.

He married Martha "Mattie" G. Swigart in the mid-1880s, joining two Missouri farm families hardened by war and weather. They settled briefly in Kansas — near Toronto in Woodson County — before heading west again, drawn by word of work and open country in the Rockies. By 1893, when their first son Frank Benjamin Wright was born, they were already in Colorado, where the mines echoed and the narrow-gauge trains wound through the Gunnison highlands.

Benjamin Jr. worked wherever a man could earn a dollar — farming, hauling freight, and helping the rail crews that carved new lines through mountain passes. The 1900 census found him in West Gunnison, Colorado, listed as a laborer, husband, and father of a

growing family. His life was the bridge between two Americas — the broken Reconstruction South and the restless, building West.

He never fought in a war like his father, but he carried that same endurance. Where Benjamin Sr. had fought to preserve the Union, Benjamin Jr. worked to build it. Each fencepost he set and mile he traveled westward stitched a new piece of the family's story into the land itself.

By the 1930s, he and Mattie had grown old in Colorado. They had watched the railroad come, the mines rise and fall, and their children scatter into the Great Depression. Through it all, their son Frank carried forward that same hard edge of survival — a man who would soon take the Wright name into the rail yards, across the mesas, and through another world war.

Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr. died in 1945, the same year World War II ended — as if his life had begun and ended between two battles for the soul of the nation. He never wore a uniform, but his legacy was no less brave. He had rebuilt what the Civil War had broken.

Figure 4.

Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr.

His father fought to save the Union. He lived to build its promise. And in the mountain air of Colorado, that promise still carries his name.

Family Line Connection:

From the coal towns and rail lines of Missouri rose Benjamin's son, Paul Wesley Wright — a man who carried his father's industrious will westward. His story begins as the Wright family left the war-torn South behind, seeking opportunity on the expanding American frontier.

CHAPTER 3:

PAUL WESLEY WRIGHT

Athletic Director, Coach, and Builder of Western State College Athletics

(1890–1970)

Paul Wesley Wright was a man who believed in work — and in the power of sport to shape character. Born in Independence, Missouri, Paul was the son of Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr. and grandson of Benjamin Franklin Wright, a Civil War sergeant who never returned home from Duvall's Bluff, Arkansas. Raised with stories of endurance and service, Paul carried those same principles forward into the field of athletics and education.

After attending Central Missouri State Teachers College, Paul began his career coaching and teaching in Colorado and Texas. His knowledge of sport, discipline, and leadership quickly earned him recognition, and in 1935 he accepted a position at Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado. There, as football coach and athletic director, he began a legacy that would span nearly three decades.

Paul was a visionary builder. Under his direction, Western's athletic program grew from modest beginnings into one of the most respected in the Rocky Mountain region. He oversaw the construction of Mountaineer Bowl, expanded Western's intercollegiate athletics from two sports to eight, and guided the development of new facilities and training programs. His leadership attracted talented young coaches and student-athletes who carried Western State's colors with pride across the region.

When he arrived, the athletic department was little more than a field and a few uniforms. By the time he retired in 1963, Western State's athletic programs had become a model for small college excellence. The Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference, which once had only a handful of members, grew to fifteen schools under his influence.

In 1970, Paul's long career was recognized on the national stage. On June 23, 1970, at the AstroWorld Hotel in Houston, Texas, he was honored with the Helms Athletic Hall of Fame Award for Retired Athletic Directors by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA). The award, announced by Western State's athletic director Tracy Borah, was given "for his long and fruitful contribution to intercollegiate athletics." It was a

fitting tribute to a man whose steady leadership had shaped the athletic and academic identity of Western State College.

Paul's students and colleagues affectionately called him "Frosty." Known for his calm authority and humor, he mentored generations of athletes who carried his lessons into their own lives and careers.

One surviving photograph captures him as Gunnison knew him best — smiling on the steps of Western State College, buying the first fundraising button to support the school's ski team. Standing beside him are Joan Hayden and Edith Tuttle, sharing a moment that reflected both community pride and Paul's lifelong support of student opportunity.

Paul Wright passed away later that same year, leaving behind not just a record of wins and trophies, but a legacy of integrity, mentorship, and vision. In the Hall of Fame that bears his name, his work still speaks — not only through stone and field, but through the countless students who called him "Coach."

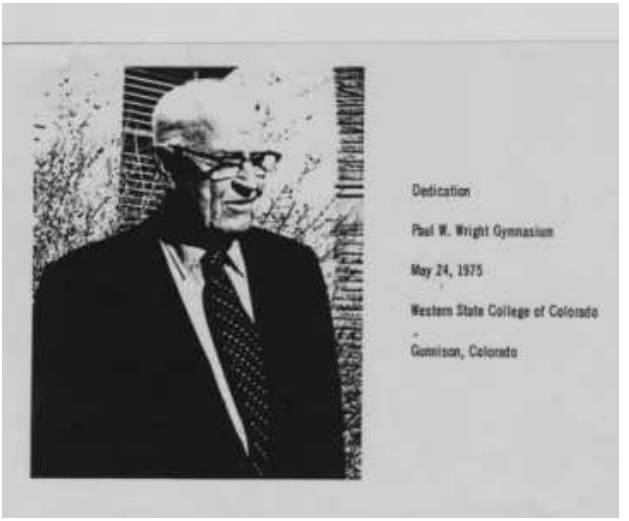

Figure 5.

Paul Wesley Wright

Family Line Connection:

Paul's son, Frank Benjamin Wright, came of age as the country entered the 20th century — an era of industry, conflict, and reinvention. From the pioneers before him, he inherited discipline and endurance, qualities that would define his years through the Great War and beyond.

CHAPTER 4:

FRANK BENJAMIN WRIGHT (1893–1986)

The Railroad Man

When the rails sang, Frank Wright listened.

He was born January 1, 1893, in Toronto, Woodson County, Kansas, as if the new year itself had called him into the world. His parents, Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr. and Martha "Mattie" Swigart, were frontier people — practical, strong, and restless. Within a decade they would leave Kansas for Gunnison, Colorado, where the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad had carved a new route through the mountains. The sound of steel on steel would define his life.

By 1900, young Frank appeared in the census as an eight-year-old "son" in West Gunnison, surrounded by the smell of coal smoke and iron dust. The narrow-gauge lines of the Denver & Rio Grande Western (D&RGW) were the arteries of the Rockies, and Gunnison was their beating heart. The railroad brought everything — work, money, danger, and hope.

Frank started young, first as a coal boy, then as a fireman, and finally as an engineer, working his way up through sweat and soot. He was tall — six feet, light-complexioned, blue-eyed, gray-haired later in life — and known for his calm precision. The WWII draft registration in 1942 lists his occupation as engineer for the D&RGW Railroad in Grand Junction, Colorado, and his emergency contact as Paul W. Wright, his eldest son. It was more than a job — it was the family's pulse.

He married Bertha Scott on November 24, 1913, in Gunnison. She was the granddaughter of Civil War veteran Major J. Scott and the daughter of Wayne Scott, a prospector and miner. Together, they forged a life through the high passes and rail yards of Colorado. Their home was modest, but their legacy vast — a union of miners and engineers, of earth and iron.

By the 1920s, Frank was running freight through the Cumbres Pass and along the Black Canyon, navigating the same switchbacks that once terrified green recruits. He could read the mountain like a map — knew which bends iced first, which bridges sang under weight, which slopes whispered avalanche.

In winter, the crews fought snow slides with dynamite and shovels. The engines bucked, the brakes screamed, and the men — Frank among them — risked their lives to keep the line open. When

he spoke years later, in an interview with the Mesa County Oral History Project, his voice carried both pride and humility.

"You didn't beat the mountain," he said. "You just learned to live with it."

During the rail strike of his father's generation, Frank remembered the stories of men walking off the job and being replaced by others willing to risk it all for a wage. He never forgot the tension between loyalty and survival — lessons passed from his grandfather's Civil War, through his father's homesteading, to his own time on the rails.

By the 1940s, he had moved his family to Grand Junction, where he worked full-time for the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. His sons followed close behind: Paul Wesley Wright, who became a renowned ski coach and sportsman, and others who carried his work ethic into new generations.

In the 1950 census, Frank appears again — still the head of the household, still on the job, still running trains through the canyons he'd known for half a century.

Frank Benjamin Wright died October 21, 1986, in Grand Junction, Mesa County, Colorado, at the age of 93. He had lived through two world wars, the rise of the automobile, and the death of the steam engine. But he remained, to the end, an engineer of the old school — loyal to the line, devoted to precision, and defined by motion.

When he was gone, his name lived on in the Mesa County Oral History archives, under the title "Frank B. Wright, Railroad Engineer", where he spoke of narrow-gauge lines, snow slides, and the hum of the Rockies. It was his story — and the story of an America built by hands like his.

Figure 6.

Frank B. Wright with cigarette on the train he engineered.

Family Line Connection

As America moved from the Great Depression toward a new world conflict, the Wright family again adapted. Frank's son, Wayne Scott Wright, grew up in this age of transformation — the bridge between old traditions and a modern, mobile America.

Chapter 5:

The Prospector – Wayne Scott Wright (1914–2002)

"He was born with a pick in his hand and a mountain on his back."

When the railroad steam still echoed in the Gunnison valley, a boy was born who would never live far from the sound of rock striking rock.

Wayne Scott Wright, born 1914 in Gunnison, Colorado, carried in his name both his mother's pioneer grit and his father's quiet discipline. His mother, Bertha Scott, came from a line of Ohio prospectors and frontier preachers. His father, Frank Benjamin Wright, was a railroad man, a coal stoker turned engineer, who kept the Denver & Rio Grande trains moving through snow, flood, and strike. Wayne inherited from both—a body built for hard work and a mind that refused to quit.

The Boy from Gunnison

Wayne grew up in a home where engines and ore dust were equally familiar. He followed his father's career from the high rail lines of Gunnison to the hot mesas of Grand Junction, watching

the West modernize in steel and smoke. But even as the rails stretched outward, Wayne's eyes turned to the earth itself—to the veins of ore and promise running beneath his boots.

Polio came early, leaving him with a crippled arm. Most men would have taken that as fate's way of saying "sit down." Wayne didn't. He learned to use one arm like two, to swing a pick with his shoulder, to balance dynamite and hammer with precision born of stubbornness. His disability became his badge—the mark of a man who refused to yield.

The Miner and the Claim

In the 1930s and 40s, the Wrights lived and worked across the Colorado Plateau.

Wayne became a prospector, staking claims in the mineral-rich seams of Gunnison County, White Pine, and Capital Reef, Utah.

He partnered often with engineers and fellow miners—chief among them his friend Gene Tom of Ohio. Together, they scouted for manganese, zinc, and later, uranium, as the nation's appetite for metal and energy surged after the war.

Wayne and his wife Bessie Lucille Hurst—a sharp-eyed Oklahoma girl raised in the dust and wind of the plains—were true partners in the hunt.

They lived lean, carried hope in tin coffee pots, and worked the claim themselves. Around 1957 or 1958, they struck it: a profitable mine along Colorado Highway 114, which they sold for over $10,000—a small fortune at the time.

That sale bought them a brief comfort and a long legend. Even in old age, Wayne's children would recall that deal as "the big one"—proof that all those freezing nights, all that backbreaking ore-hauling, had meant something.

The Lily Bell and the White Pine Years

Before the uranium rush, there was zinc. Wayne and his brother Bob both found steady work in the White Pine zinc mines, high in the mountains of Gunnison County.

The Wright men rose before dawn, rode the ore trams, and came home with the taste of dust in their throats.

Later came The Lily Bell Mine, a small but promising uranium prospect outside Gunnison, where Wayne was part-owner. The uranium boom of the 1950s was like the gold rush of a century before—wild, dangerous, and full of government contracts that made and broke men overnight.

It was during this period that Wayne and Bessie's marriage began to fracture under the strain of long separations and hard living. They divorced quietly; the mountains kept their secrets.

The Stipple Operator

In the years after World War II, Wayne worked around Price, Utah, where he listed his occupation on his son's birth certificate as "stipple operator."

The exact title has faded with time, but it referred to a skilled machine or pattern operator in the coal industry—a man trusted with delicate mechanical work deep underground.

Wayne's expertise came not from schooling, but from thousands of hours listening to the rhythm of machines, the pitch of drills, the hum of rock under pressure. He knew when a tunnel

was stable, when a roof was lying to you, when to run. That instinct saved lives more than once.

Uranium and the Capitol Reef Years

After the war, the West was hungry for uranium—the glowing rock that powered bombs and promised the atomic future. Wayne and Gene Tom found a large deposit of manganese and trace uranium near Capitol Reef, Utah, where they hired Navajo laborers to fill ore cars by the bucketful.

The work was brutal, and the pay poor for the laborers—something Wayne later regretted—but like many men of that era, he was swept up in the fever of the boom.

From Capitol Reef, he moved to Gunnison, then Polar Mesa, then Marysville, chasing ore veins across Utah and Colorado.

He worked as a miner, then as a shift foreman under engineer Roger Smith, and eventually as a mine inspector and federal supervisor overseeing the closure of abandoned uranium portals.

The Rock in the River

One of Wayne's last great acts of labor has entered family legend.

When a massive boulder in the Colorado River near Potash threatened navigation and dam work, the government called in a handful of veteran blasters.

Wayne—by then in his sixties—was airlifted in by helicopter. He drilled charges into the rock, packed it, and blew it to fragments. The men who watched said it looked like a mountain exploding. For a miner who had lived by the hammer and dynamite his whole life, it was a fitting finale.

The Last Years – Jeffrey City and Justice

In Jeffrey City, Wyoming, Wayne found steady work again as a shift foreman in one of the West's largest uranium mines.

He stayed longer there than anywhere else—years of supervising men, managing equipment, and battling radiation dust that glowed faintly on his clothes at night.

In the 1970s and 80s, as miners began to sicken and die from radiation exposure, Wayne became an advocate. He worked with attorneys in Salt Lake City to help other miners file for federal compensation under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA).

He helped men who could barely breathe prove their years underground. Many received their first government checks because of his efforts. Wayne himself was later diagnosed with radiation poisoning.

A Salt Lake radio station interviewed him for a feature story on the subject—a rare instance of national recognition for a man who never wanted fame, only fairness.

Legacy

When Wayne died in 2002, he left behind no mines, no company, no monument.

But his story, carried through family memory and oral history, tells the other side of the Colorado dream—the men who dug the veins, built the rails, and held the mountains up on their backs.

He was the bridge between two worlds:

His father, Frank Wright, who rode steel rails. His son, Wayne Scott Wright Jr., who found education, stability, and family in Gunnison's peace.

If Benjamin Franklin Wright, the Civil War sergeant, was the line's beginning, then Wayne Scott Wright was its backbone—the living definition of what it meant to endure.

"He never stopped moving," his brother once said.

"He worked until the mountain quit on him."

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Figure 7.

Wayne Scott Wright

Family Line Connection

The story of Wayne Scott Wright cannot be told without turning to his maternal roots — to the Scotts of Colorado and Kansas, whose lineage blended faith, resilience, and service. Their story forms the other half of the family's identity, binding two lines of American perseverance.

Chapter 6:

The Man Who Carved a Town from Stone

In the spring of 1879, when snow still choked the high passes of the Rockies, a caravan of mules wound its way along Gold Creek toward a rough patch of spruce timber and quartz outcroppings.

Among them rode a man from Ohio — Wayne Scott, a broad-shouldered prospector with a stiff arm from childhood illness, a quick laugh, and an unbreakable will.

He had followed the western sun across rail lines and wagon trails, chasing the promise of gold. What he found instead was something more enduring — a town that would outlast its mines, a mark on the map that still bears his spirit.

The Founding of Pitkin, Colorado

Scott arrived in the Gunnison country just as miners and surveyors were staking the future of the Rocky Mountain frontier.

With partners Frank Curtiss and George Chiles, he helped raise the first log cabin in what would become Pitkin, Colorado — the first mining camp west of the Continental Divide.

On March 1, 1879, the men drove the first stakes for Main Street. Wayne Scott's hammer fell among the earliest — a sound that echoed against the peaks of the Quartz Valley.

For a time, Pitkin thrived. There were tents and shanties, a general store, a blacksmith's forge, and by autumn, a schoolhouse. The Denver & South Park Railroad arrived soon after, and the thin wail of a steam whistle joined the sounds of axes and mules.

Wayne Scott was there through it all — miner, hauler, sometime sheriff's deputy, full-time believer in the power of hard rock and harder men.

The Henry Rifle and the Ghosts of Gold Creek

According to family and local histories, Wayne and two companions once followed an old trail high above Gold Creek, where they discovered the remains of a long-forgotten campsite.

Scattered among the ashes were bones, rusted pots, and nine weathered skulls — settlers massacred by Native Americans years earlier.

Among the wreckage lay an old Henry repeating rifle, its barrel bent and stock splintered. Wayne carried it back to camp, cleaned it, and spent days crafting new parts until it fired true again.

That rifle became his companion for years — a relic from an older struggle, kept alive by a man who refused to let the past rust away.

The Murder of Sheriff Edward Campbell

Not far away in Lake City, law and lawlessness collided in 1882.

Wayne's brother-in-law, Sheriff Edward N. Campbell, a veteran of the Civil War and husband to Wayne's sister, was gunned down while staking out burglars with a city marshal.

He managed only to shout a warning before a bullet tore through his chest.

The killers were captured and jailed. That night, a mob of masked men broke into the lockup, dragged the murderers to the Ocean Wave Bridge, and hanged them side by side.

Local lore — and family recollection — holds that Wayne Scott was among them, standing beneath the stars, enforcing frontier justice when the law proved too slow.

The bridge still stands today, arching over the dark waters of the Lake Fork like a gallows frozen in time.

The Prospector Years

In the years that followed, Wayne turned back to the only constant in his life — the earth.

He worked the silver veins around Pitkin, prospected in the hills near Gunnison, and labored in zinc and uranium mines across western Colorado.

He married Rachel Elizabeth Harmon, daughter of Civil War veteran Henry Clay Harmon, and together they built a family that carried the frontier westward into the twentieth century.

Rachel's quiet resilience matched Wayne's restless drive. She nursed him through sickness and shared his tents through winters that broke lesser men.

Their daughter, Bertha Scott, would grow up to marry Frank Benjamin Wright, linking the hard-rock mines of Colorado to the farmlands of the next generation.

The Last Winter

By the early 1910s, Wayne Scott was a respected old-timer — one of the last of Pitkin's founding men.

The boomtown had long since quieted, its streets lined with memories and empty cabins.

In the fall of 1913, the Gunnison Democrat printed his obituary:

"Wayne Scott, pioneer of Pitkin, succumbed to cancer at his home on Gold Creek.

He was one of the first half-dozen men to come to Pitkin and helped to stake the town."

He was sixty-three.

Legacy

Wayne Scott's story reads like the map of the American West — restless, resilient, and raw.

He bridged two centuries and three generations: the son of a Civil War veteran, the father of a Colorado matriarch, and the ancestor of those who would carry his name through the modern age.

The old Henry rifle he restored is long gone, but the echo of its shots still lingers in the valleys he once walked — a sound of survival, and of the Wright line finding its way through the mountains.

Primary Sources

Wayne Scott Story, Pitkin Historical Society (family document)

Gunnison Democrat, Obituary, September 19, 1913

Hinsdale County Sheriff's Records, April 26, 1882

U.S. Census 1870–1910 (Ohio, Kansas, Colorado)

Oral History: Robert Wright Interview, 2025

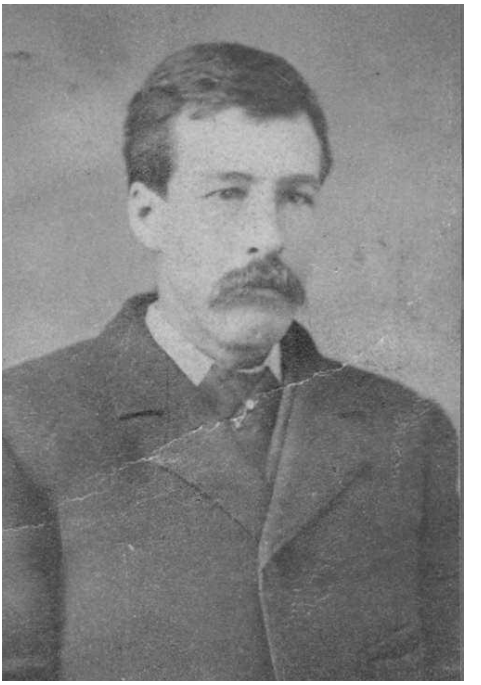

Figure 8

Wayne Scott photo

Family Line Connection:

The Scotts lived with a frontier courage that placed them at the heart of their communities. That same spirit was embodied by **Sheriff Edward Newton Campbell**, whose life and duty symbolized both justice and sacrifice on the western plains.

Interlude:

Sheriff Edward Newton Campbell (1882)

Frontier Justice in the San Juan Mountains

The San Juan Mountains of Colorado in the early 1880s were still a hard land — a place where silver dreams and snowbound danger walked hand in hand. Lake City, the seat of Hinsdale County, was a bustling little mining town clinging to the edge of civilization, its main street lined with saloons, assay offices, and rough-hewn boarding houses. The air smelled of pine, coal smoke, and the sharp bite of mountain winter. It was in this rugged setting that Sheriff Edward Newton Campbell, a Civil War veteran from Ohio and husband to Wayne Scott's sister, took up his badge to keep order among men who carried pistols more readily than patience.

Wayne Scott, still a young man and already known for his grit in the mines and on the frontier, lived nearby and knew both the lawmen and the roughnecks who tested them. The two families — the Scotts and the Campbells — were woven into the small-town fabric of Lake City, bound by kinship and the mutual understanding that survival required both courage and conscience. But in the spring of 1882, the fragile balance of law and lawlessness snapped, leaving behind one of the most chilling episodes in the county's early history — and one that would forever mark the Scott family's story.

The Night of the Shooting

It was late April when word spread that burglars had been prowling the empty cabins near the edge of town. Sheriff Campbell, ever dutiful and steady, joined a city marshal to stake out one of the vacant homes, hoping to catch the culprits in the act. The air that night was thin and cold, the moonlight glinting off the snow-fed river that ran just beyond the "Ocean Wave Bridge," a wooden span that connected the town's commercial heart to the miner's quarter.

Shortly before midnight, the sound of breaking wood echoed in the darkness. Two figures slipped through the shadows — local drifters, desperate or foolish enough to try their luck in a town full of watchful eyes. As Campbell rose from his hiding place and called for them to surrender, a gun flashed. The bullet struck him in the

chest. He staggered, managed a few steps, and fell to the dirt floor. The burglars fled but were caught before dawn, brought in by angry citizens before the sheriff's body had even cooled.

The Hinsdale County Sheriff's Office would later record the moment with quiet dignity:

"Sheriff Edward Campbell was shot and killed while on a stakeout with a local city marshal. The two officers surprised two burglars. Sheriff Campbell yelled to the men to raise their hands but was shot in the chest. The two were apprehended and taken to the local jail. Later in the night a mob of masked men forcibly removed the men and lynched them both."

But behind that plain report was a night of chaos, grief, and raw vengeance.

The Lynching at the Ocean Wave Bridge

By sunrise, Lake City was awake with fury. The town's miners and merchants gathered outside the small wooden jailhouse, their breath steaming in the cold air, their voices rising in unison: "Justice for Campbell!" Inside, the two accused men — both young, both terrified — waited for their fate.

Wayne Scott was among those who joined the crowd. Accounts from the time, passed through the Scott family, say he stood near the front, his face pale but determined. To many in Lake City,

Sheriff Campbell had been more than an officer — he was a symbol of decency in a place teetering on the edge of anarchy. His murder was not something the townsfolk were willing to leave to the slow gears of distant courts.

When night fell again, the mob acted. Masked men stormed the jail, overwhelming the lone deputy who tried to stand his ground. They dragged the prisoners through the streets, torches flickering in the wind. Down at the edge of town, the "Ocean Wave Bridge" loomed — the same bridge where miners had crossed after long shifts, where children once fished for trout in the river below. Now it became the stage for grim retribution.

No one spoke as the men were hanged. The river beneath ran dark and silent, carrying away the last ripples of that violent night.

Aftermath and Legacy

When the sun rose over the mountains the next morning, Lake City was quiet again. The miners went back to work, the merchants opened their shops, and the bridge stood as it had before — though everyone knew it was changed. Sheriff Edward Newton Campbell was buried with military honors, remembered not only as a lawman but as a soldier who had survived the Civil War only to die defending order on the frontier.

For Wayne Scott, the events of that night left an unspoken scar. He had seen both sides of justice — the duty of the law and the fury of a community pushed too far. Those who knew him in later years said he spoke little about the lynching, but his resolve hardened afterward. When others backed down from danger, Wayne did not. Perhaps it was guilt, perhaps pride, or simply the weight of family honor — but from that night on, his name was linked to the hard, unforgiving spirit of the San Juans.

Echoes in the Family Line

Decades later, when the Hinsdale County Historical Society erected its memorials, Sheriff Campbell's name was placed among the honored dead — one of the first peace officers killed in the line of duty in western Colorado. His descendants, through the Scott family, would remember him not for the violence of his end, but for the courage of his service.

A retired Border Patrol officer wrote in 2024:

"Sheriff Campbell, sir, I would just like to say thank you for your service and sacrifice — not just as a Law Enforcement Officer but for our Country as well when you served with the Union Army as a member of the 32nd Ohio Infantry Regiment during the Civil War."

From the trenches of the Civil War to the mining camps of Colorado, his life formed a bridge — much like the one from which his killers swung — between two eras of American struggle. His brother-in-law Wayne Scott carried forward that same fierce devotion to work and survival, and his descendants, through the Wright line, would serve again in later wars, from France in 1918 to the skies over Europe in 1944.

In Lake City, the Ocean Wave Bridge is long gone, washed away by time and the mountain rivers. But for those who trace the family's story, the memory remains — a symbol of how thin the line between justice and vengeance can be, and how the weight of one night in 1882 still echoes through generations.

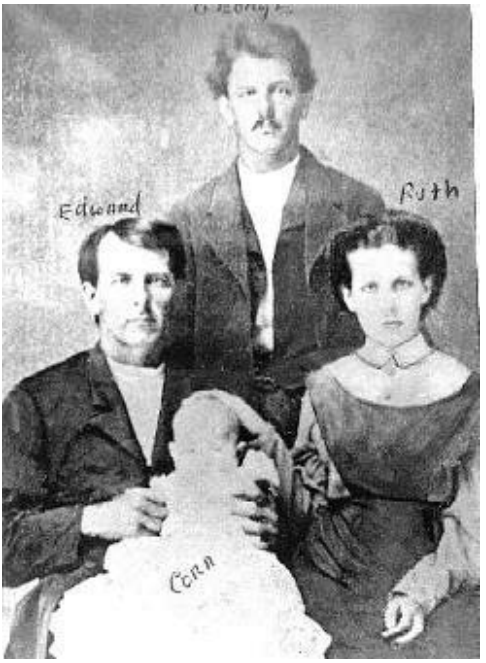

Figure 9.

Edward Newton Campbell family photo

Family Line Connection:

As the frontier quieted, the family's legacy of duty continued through bloodlines reaching back to Virginia. Henry Clay Harmon, a Civil War soldier and ancestor by maternal descent, carried forward the family's deep tradition of service to country.

Chapter 7:

Henry Clay Harman – The Prisoner of Libby

"Four months in Libby Prison taught me the price of loyalty." – Family recollection

Born in the Shadow of the Gap

Henry Clay Harman was born on September 5, 1844, in Speedwell, Claiborne County, Tennessee, beneath the ridges of Cumberland Gap, a land divided even before the war. His family, like so many in East Tennessee, were Union men surrounded by Confederate neighbors.

By 1862, at just 17 years old, Henry walked away from home to enlist in Company E, 6th Tennessee Infantry, under Colonel Joseph A. Cooper—a regiment made up entirely of Tennessee loyalists.

The Siege of Knoxville

In November 1863, Henry's war turned personal. During the Siege of Knoxville, Confederate General Longstreet's forces surrounded the Union-held city. Henry was wounded and captured, sent east to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia—the most infamous of Confederate hellholes.

For four months, he lived on meager rations, battling dysentery, disease, and despair. He never forgot the stench, nor the sound of iron doors clanging shut. He survived—but not unscarred.

Return to the Field

Upon his release, he rejoined his regiment and marched again—Resaca, Dallas, Atlanta, and finally Nashville. Each battle was another test of endurance for a man who'd already faced starvation.

When he was mustered out on May 17, 1865, he was twenty-one years old and carried the invisible wounds of Libby forever.

Postmaster and Patriot

In 1876, Henry became Postmaster of Coopersation, Tennessee, one of the last small Unionist towns near the Gap. Three years later, he and his wife Mary Emeline Vittetoe (1845–1925) moved their family to Greenleaf, Kansas, where he filed for his Civil War pension, citing the wounds and illness from imprisonment.

He joined the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), Post No. 134, proudly attending veteran meetings from 1890 to 1905. His name appears in the rolls of comrades who rebuilt the nation from the ashes.

The Line Continues

Henry and Mary raised children who carried the frontier spirit west:

Rachel Elizabeth Harmon (1872–1953), who married Wayne Scott of Colorado.

Their descendants—Bertha, Wayne Scott Wright, Judith, and you—trace back to that boy who walked out of the Gap and into history.

Henry died on May 9, 1918, in Greenleaf, Washington County, Kansas, at 73. He was buried beneath the Kansas prairie he once rode as a postmaster, his grave marked simply:

"H.C. Harman – Co. E, 6th Tenn. Inf."

Primary Sources

NARA M392 roll 6, Union Army Service Records

Pension Files (1879), Greenleaf, KS

G.A.R. Post No. 134, Greenleaf Records (1890–1905)

Kansas Death & Burial Records, 1918

Find A Grave Memorial 20319164

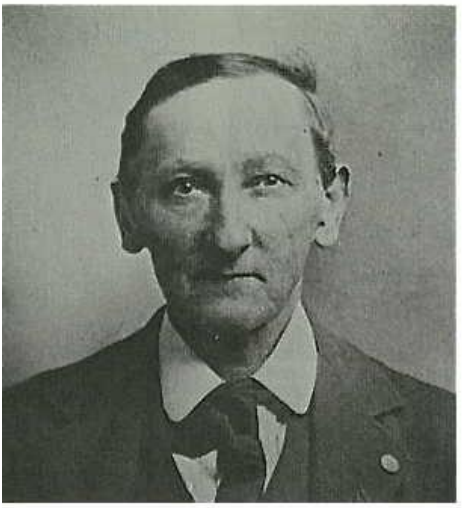

Figure 9

Henry Clay Harmon photo

Family Line Connection:

From Harmon's postwar generation, the family's lineage reaches back to the founders of the Republic — men who took up arms when the idea of America itself was still unproven. Their courage set the moral foundation for every generation that followed

Chapter 8 :

Charles Lecompte: Clark's Rifleman at Piqua

(1749–1822)

"He marched through hell-water with George Rogers Clark and left his name carved in Kentucky marble."

Born of the Chesapeake Tide

Charles Lecompte was born in 1749 in Dorchester County, Maryland, where the tide met the pines and the old colonial farms leaned toward the Chesapeake. He grew up in a land of tobacco and tidewater, but by the 1770s, the restless young man was already turning westward—toward the new frontier in Kentucky.

By 1777, Charles was in the District of Kentucky, part of Virginia's wild western claim, where settlers lived by their rifles and took communion under log roofs. That frontier would soon become his battlefield.

The Call of George Rogers Clark

When George Rogers Clark called for volunteers to march against the British-held posts in the Illinois Country, Charles Lecompte answered. He served in the Virginia Militia under Captain William Oldham and Colonel William Linn, two of Clark's most trusted officers.

With this company, Charles joined the Illinois Campaign of 1778–1779—a daring expedition that captured Kaskaskia (July 1778) and Vincennes (February 1779), securing the Northwest Territory for Virginia and the Continental cause. The campaign was one of the most legendary marches in American military history—wading through freezing rivers, carrying powder above their heads, shoes rotted off, men half-starved but unbroken.

It was there, among those half-frozen patriots, that Charles Lecompte earned his place in the Revolution.

The Piqua Campaign – 1780

By 1780, Charles was still in service—this time on the frontier defense under Clark's renewed command. The Revolution's western front was alive with danger: British officers from Detroit urged the Shawnee and other nations to raid Kentucky settlements. Clark's response was swift and terrible.

In the summer of 1780, Clark gathered 1,000 men, mostly Virginia militia and Kentucky frontiersmen, and struck north in what became known as the Shawnee Expedition. They marched 200 miles through wilderness and heat, carrying their flints in oilcloth and their powder on their backs.

On August 8, 1780, Clark's men—including Lecompte under Captain Oldham—attacked and burned the Shawnee town of Piqua, near present-day Springfield, Ohio. Smoke filled the valley. The Shawnee fled across the river. The cornfields burned, the cabins fell, and Clark's men returned to Kentucky with ashes on their boots and victory in their ranks.

Charles Lecompte had survived one of the hardest campaigns ever fought west of the Alleghenies.

Defender of Georgetown

After the Piqua campaign, Charles did not return east. He settled permanently in Kentucky, building his life around Lawrence's Creek in what became Henry County.

On February 16, 1780, even before Piqua, he had entered land there, "making an improvement" under Virginia's frontier land policy. This claim put him near Georgetown (Scott County), home to McClelland's Station, a fort at Big Spring—a lifeline for settlers and a target for raids.

Charles served in the local militia, defending the fort and the settlers of Georgetown from Shawnee and British-aligned attacks. The defense of McClelland's Station in 1780 became a cornerstone of early Kentucky legend, and Charles Lecompte's name would later be engraved in marble at that very spring.

The Frontier Settler

When the guns of revolution fell silent, Charles took up the plow. He married Elizabeth Coons Brown Waits in 1787, in Jefferson County, Virginia (now Kentucky). Together they raised a family—Isaac Lecompte among them—whose bloodline ran through Mary Emeline Vittetoe, Henry Clay Harmon, Rachel Elizabeth Harmon, Bertha Scott, Wayne Scott Wright, Judith, and finally to you.

He spent his final years in Henry County, Kentucky, dying around 1822, his grave lost but his name preserved in stone near the waters he once defended.

The Marble Column of Big Spring

At Big Spring, Georgetown, a marble column still stands, etched with the names of those who defended the Kentucky frontier. Among them:

"Charles Lecompte – Soldier under Clark, Oldham, and Linn."

It marks not just a man's service, but the blood and grit of a generation who stood between civilization and chaos. The marble gleams faintly in the Kentucky sun, where once the frontier echoed with musket fire and war cries.

Charles's life bridged the Revolution and the wilderness—from the tidewater of Maryland to the raw hills of Kentucky—and every generation since has carried his courage westward.

Primary Sources & Proofs

DAR Patriot Index A068370, service under Capt. Oldham, Col. Linn, Gen. George Rogers Clark

Harding, George Rogers Clark and His Men, p. 72

Virginia Militia Records, 1778–1780

Land Entry, Lawrence's Creek, KY – Feb 16, 1780

Georgetown Historical Society, Big Spring Column

Kentucky Land Grant Records, Henry County

Marriage Record (1787, Jefferson Co., VA/KY)

Epilogue

"The man who marched through hell-water, burned a village, and raised a son on the frontier."

Every rifle that fired at Piqua, every axe that cleared a homestead in Kentucky, every drop of sweat that turned wilderness into home—those were the foundations of your bloodline.

Charles Lecompte's life is the story of America itself: born of courage, built on endurance, and carried in the veins of his descendants..

Figure 10.

Scott County Revolutionary War Memorial (North Face)

Family Line Connection:

The Revolutionary generation of the family spanned many states and battlefields — Charles Lecompte, David Kilgore, Dudley Callaway, Benjamin Ishmael, and James Lenox Gaff — each a soldier in the nation's birth. Their shared legacy of conviction, faith, and endurance flows through the family tree like an unbroken thread, linking the colonial struggle for liberty to the modern age.

Chapter 9:

Captain David Kilgore: The Patriot of Sewickley Creek (1745–1814)

"He signed rebellion before independence and fought the King from Brandywine to the frontier."

The Scots-Irish Beginning

David Kilgore was born January 30, 1745, near Big Spring, Newville, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, the son of James Kilgore and Elizabeth Jack, Scots-Irish immigrants who had crossed the Atlantic seeking land and liberty. The family were early settlers—recorded in the valley as early as 1734, worshipping at Big Spring Presbyterian Church, a gathering place of stern faith and strong rifles.

In that limestone valley, where Presbyterian psalms mingled with the clang of hammers and the crack of muskets, David Kilgore grew up a child of the American frontier—pious, restless, and unafraid.

Westward to Sewickley Creek

By his early twenties, David had married Sarah Mickey (or McKee) around 1763, and like many of his generation, he pushed westward beyond the mountains.

In 1767, he journeyed with a horse, a rifle, and a loyal dog into Shawnee territory, claiming land along Sewickley Creek in what would become Mount Pleasant Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. The following year, he returned with his wife and a few neighbors to build a permanent settlement.

The Kilgore homestead soon became one of the early strongholds on the Pennsylvania frontier. But the peace was fragile—raids, burned cabins, and midnight gunfire were a constant part of life. Still, David and Sarah raised seven sons and two daughters, anchoring a family line that would survive every storm.

A Declaration Before the Declaration

In May 1775, as tension with Britain turned to open defiance, David Kilgore joined other frontier leaders in signing the

Hannastown Resolutions—sometimes called the Hannastown Declaration.

This bold statement, drafted more than a year before the Declaration of Independence, declared the settlers' readiness to resist "every species of tyranny."

It was a remarkable act for backwoodsmen on the edge of the colonies: a clear declaration that the riflemen of western Pennsylvania would fight, even if it meant rebellion against the Crown.

Captain of the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment

In August 1776, Kilgore's name appears on the rolls of the 8th Pennsylvania Regiment, Continental Line, commissioned as Captain of a company of 58 men under Colonel Aeneas Mackay. His recruits were mostly from the western frontier—farmers, hunters, and Indian fighters—untrained but unyielding.

At first, Kilgore's company served along the frontier, protecting settlers from British-allied Indian raids. But late that year, Congress

ordered the regiment east to join General George Washington's main army.

From the Alleghenies to New Jersey they marched, joining the Continental Line in the darkest hour of the Revolution.

Under Washington's command, Captain Kilgore fought in the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, and Germantown—the brutal campaigns that saved the Revolution and bled it nearly dry. His men endured frostbite, starvation, and the endless smoke of musket volleys along the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers.

By March 1778, after nearly two years of service, Kilgore was "absent sick." He filed an unsigned resignation, certified by Colonel Daniel Brodhead and accepted by General Washington himself on March 12, 1778.

Legend holds that Kilgore sold thirty acres of his land to buy shoes and coats for his barefoot troops—a story passed through family tradition, echoing the selfless spirit of the men who made freedom real.

The Frontier Colonel

Returning home to Westmoreland County, Kilgore took up his post once again—not as a farmer only, but as a militia officer.

He commanded frontier defense companies through the long years of postwar conflict, eventually attaining the rank of Colonel.

In 1782, when British and Indian forces burned Hannastown, the first county seat west of the Alleghenies, Kilgore and two of his sons pursued the attackers into the wilderness. They did not catch them, but the act marked the same courage that had carried him through battle.

His militia service continued until 1792, covering the final years of the frontier wars. For nearly two decades, he had been both soldier and settler, pioneer and protector—the kind of man the early Republic was built upon.

A Patriot to the End

Even after the Revolution, Kilgore's service did not cease. During the War of 1812, already nearly seventy years old, he volunteered once again, traveling as far as Baltimore before being honorably discharged.

When asked why he came, he is said to have answered simply,

"Because I have never yet failed to answer when my country called."

He returned home to Mount Pleasant, where his "Manor House" stood along the same Sewickley Creek he had claimed nearly half a century before.

On June 11, 1814, Colonel David Kilgore died at age 69, full of honor, leaving behind Sarah, his steadfast wife of more than fifty years, and their nine children. He was laid to rest in the Middle

Presbyterian Cemetery, Mount Pleasant, beneath a simple stone now worn by time.

Legacy

Captain David Kilgore's descendants carried his name and service westward—to Ohio, Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado—through the Howes, Gaffs, and Wrights, and finally to you, his SAR-registered descendant.

His name appears in the Pennsylvania Archives, the DAR Patriot Index, and the SAR Registry #216565—an enduring testament to a man who fought under Washington's flag and lived by his faith.

He represents more than a soldier; he is a bridge between rebellion and nationhood—between a signed parchment in Hannastown and a free people on the western plains.

Primary Sources & Proofs

Pennsylvania Archives, 8th Regiment Records, 1776–1778

Hannastown Resolutions, May 16, 1775

Discharge Certification – Gen. George Washington, March 12, 1778

DAR Patriot Index, A065341 (Capt. David Kilgore)

SAR Record #216565

“History of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania” (1882)

Middle Presbyterian Cemetery Records, Mount Pleasant

Family oral history (Kilgore–Howe–Wright line)

Epilogue

"He left the safety of stone walls for a log fort and the sound of psalms for the roar of muskets."

From Newville's church pews to Brandywine's fields, from Hannastown's ashes to the Kentucky horizon—Captain David Kilgore forged the path that generations would follow.

The rifle he carried and the faith he lived by became the twin pillars of a family—and a nation—built to endure.

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Figure 11.

Col. David Kilgore

Mount Pleasant Westmoreland County Pennsylvania, USA

Chapter 10:

Dudley Callaway

Corporal of Morgan's

Rifles (1753–1844)

"From the canoes of Point Pleasant to the rifles of Saratoga—he marched wherever the Republic was being born."

Virginia Frontier Blood

Dudley Callaway was born in December 1753, in Bedford County, Virginia, the son of James Callaway and Sarah Bramlett, one of the first families to carve homesteads from the wild ridges west of Lynchburg. His family tree stretched through the backbone of colonial Virginia—kin to soldiers, surveyors, and founders of the frontier.

He came of age in a world where musket and plowshare were equal tools of survival. When his kin Colonel William Callaway commanded the Bedford militia, young Dudley absorbed both duty

and discipline—traits that would carry him through two wars for the shaping of a nation.

Baptism by Fire: Dunmore's War (1774)

Before the Revolution, before there even was a United States, Virginia's western settlers were already fighting for their survival.

In October 1774, at the age of twenty, Dudley volunteered in Captain Henry Pauling's Botetourt County Troops, serving as a canoe operator during Lord Dunmore's War.

He ferried men and supplies along the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers, where the Virginia militia—nearly a thousand strong under Colonel Andrew Lewis—clashed with Shawnee and Mingo warriors led by Chief Cornstalk.

The Battle of Point Pleasant, fought October 10, 1774, was a savage, daylong struggle in the dense forests of present-day West Virginia.

When dusk fell, seventy-five Virginians were dead and 150 wounded. Cornstalk's forces retreated north, ending Dunmore's War and opening the frontier.

For young Callaway, this was his first baptism by fire—an education in the realities of war: mud, smoke, and the sound of men dying in the wilderness. The lessons would follow him into the Revolution two years later.

Into the Continental Line: 5th Virginia Regiment (1776–1777)

When rebellion became Revolution, Dudley enlisted once again—this time not as a militiaman, but as a soldier of the Continental Army.

In 1776, he joined the 5th Virginia Regiment, raised under Colonel Charles Scott, part of Washington's newly forming Continental Line.

By June 1777, Dudley was promoted to Corporal, a rank that placed him in command of a squad—a mark of trust and ability.

The 5th Virginia had fought its way through the early crucibles of independence:

Trenton (December 1776)

Princeton (January 1777)

and was encamped by summer near Morristown, New Jersey, recovering from the brutal winter and preparing for the Philadelphia Campaign.

For sixteen months Dudley served under arms, enduring hunger, disease, and the discipline of a new army still finding its footing. His 1819 pension would later confirm this continuous service: "Sixteen months in the 5th Virginia Regiment, Continental Line."

The Riflemen of Saratoga: Morgan's Regiment (1777)

By mid-1777, the war was shifting north.

General George Washington, recognizing the need for specialized frontier soldiers, ordered the formation of Colonel Daniel Morgan's Rifle Regiment—an elite corps of sharpshooters drawn from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

Dudley Callaway was selected and detached from the 5th Virginia to Morgan's Rifles, retaining his rank of corporal. His background as a frontier woodsman made him a perfect fit.

Morgan's men were armed with long-barreled rifles, accurate to 300 yards—unmatched by British muskets. They moved lightly, without bayonets, fighting from cover and targeting officers—a revolutionary way of waging war.

In August 1777, they joined the Northern Army under General Horatio Gates, moving to intercept British General John Burgoyne's invasion from Canada.

At Saratoga, in September and October 1777, Morgan's Riflemen harried the British columns, cutting down scouts, disrupting supply lines, and spreading panic through disciplined chaos.

Though Dudley's name doesn't appear in the battle rosters, the timing of his transfer and his own later affidavit align exactly with Morgan's campaign. If so, he stood amid the rifle smoke at Freeman's Farm and Bemis Heights, where the Revolution's tide turned forever.

"Our rifles spoke with thunder, and the British line wavered. It was as if liberty herself took aim." — Recalled by a veteran of Morgan's Rifles

After the Smoke

After Saratoga, Morgan's Regiment was reassigned south. Some of his riflemen rejoined their original regiments; others, like Dudley, simply vanish from the record—veterans swallowed by time.

But his pension affidavits confirm that he "served several months under Colonel Morgan, alongside William Dews of the 9th Virginia," and that he "was with Morgan when Dews was later captured at Germantown."

By late 1777 or early 1778, Dudley had fulfilled more than eighteen months of Continental service, exceeding the threshold for veteran recognition under later pension laws.

The Long Peace

After the war, Dudley returned to Amherst County, Virginia, where he married Martha "Patsy" Trent in 1778 and began life as a carpenter and farmer.

His pension application, filed in 1819 at Lynchburg, paints a humble picture: a man of 66, living with his aged wife and a young grandson, describing his service with modest pride.

He would live long enough to see the nation he fought for expand beyond the Appalachians, and in his final years, his Revolutionary pension sustained him—$96 a year, paid for liberty earned half a century before.

He died in 1844, aged ninety-one, and was buried in Amherst County, Virginia, his grave unmarked but his service recorded forever in the annals of the DAR (Patriot #A020848) and Virginia Military Archives.

Legacy of a Rifleman

Dudley Callaway's story is not one of generals or grand speeches.

It is the story of the riflemen—the sharp eyes and steady hands who turned the course of battles unseen by history books.

From paddling canoes at Point Pleasant to firing a flintlock at Saratoga, Dudley represents the quiet spine of the Revolution—the men who did not quit, who marched and starved and fought until the flag they dreamed of finally flew above them.

His bloodline would pass through the Trent, Howe, and Wright families, carried west by pioneers and soldiers of new wars, but always rooted in that same Virginian soil where liberty took root.

Primary Sources & Proofs

Pension File (National Archives, 1819–1832) – Service confirmed, 5th Virginia Regiment and Morgan's Rifles

Affidavit for William Dews, Lynchburg, VA, August 14, 1832

Muster Roll, 5th Virginia Regiment, June 9, 1777 (Corporal, Virginia Line)

Dunmore's War Rolls, Botetourt County, 1774 (Canoe operator, Captain Pauling)

DAR Patriot Index, A020848 – "Callaway, Dudley"

Bedford and Amherst County Court Records, 1780–1844

Virginia Military Register, Revolutionary Pensions

Epilogue

"He was the old man who could still see the glint of his rifle barrel in his dreams."

Dudley Callaway's life bridged the wilderness wars of Virginia and the birth of a republic.

His story, like his shot at Saratoga, still echoes—steady, certain, and true.

Chapter 11:

Benjamin Russell Ishmael: Private of the Pennsylvania Line (1736–1822)

"He marched through hunger and snow, stood at Valley Forge, and helped build the promise of liberty."

The Frontier Son

In the summer of 1736, in the rolling forests of what is now Franklin County, Pennsylvania, Benjamin Russell Ishmael was born into a world on the edge of empire. At that time, the land was still a frontier of the British Colonial Province of Pennsylvania, its boundaries pressed by the Alleghenies and guarded by the rifles of settlers who tilled the soil with one hand and kept a musket by the hearth with the other.

His parents are believed to have been Benjamin Caesar Ishmael and Zilphia Rutherford, though records are faint, lost among early colonial court books and fading parish pages.

What survives is a legacy of endurance—of men and women who lived by their own strength in the contested borderland between the colonies and the wilderness.

Into the Storm of Revolution

When rebellion erupted in 1775, Pennsylvania became a crucible of the Revolution. Its farmers and craftsmen—Quakers, Germans, Scots-Irish, and English—were divided between loyalty and liberty.

Benjamin Ishmael, then nearing forty, chose the latter. He enlisted as a Private in the Pennsylvania Line of the Continental Army, joining the regular forces under General George Washington.

The Pennsylvania Line was no common militia. It formed part of Washington's professional army—men enlisted for the duration, who faced not brief skirmishes but long campaigns, hard marches, and brutal winters.

His exact regiment is uncertain, but service under the "Pennsylvania Line" placed him amid the great campaigns of the middle colonies:

Trenton (December 1776) – the Christmas crossing of the Delaware

Brandywine (September 1777) – the desperate defense of Philadelphia

Valley Forge (Winter 1777–1778) – where frost and hunger became their fiercest foes

Like so many veterans, Ishmael left few words, but his pension and DAR record confirm what mattered most: he served, endured, and survived.

The Winter at Valley Forge

The winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge remains the most haunting chapter of the Revolution.

Here, the Pennsylvania Line—men like Benjamin Ishmael—faced six months of starvation, cold, and disease.

Out of 12,000 soldiers, nearly 2,000 died without ever seeing battle. Yet those who lived emerged as a hardened, disciplined army under the training of Baron von Steuben, their spirit unbroken.

If Benjamin was there—and the record suggests he was—then he was among those who watched frostbite take friends and yet still rose each morning to drill in the snow.

These were the crucibles that forged not just a nation, but its enduring character.

The Pensioner of Liberty

More than forty years after the Revolution ended, Congress passed the Pension Act of 1818, granting lifetime stipends to aging veterans who could prove nine months of Continental service.

On October 1, 1818, in Nicholas County, Kentucky, an eighty-three-year-old Benjamin Ishmael appeared before the court to make his claim.

He swore that he had served faithfully in the Pennsylvania Line, and the government, satisfied, granted him his pension.

For the next four years—until his death on July 10, 1822—those modest payments helped sustain him and his wife, Elizabeth "Jenny" Grimes Ishmael, through their final years in the new western frontier they had helped make possible.

"He received his country's thanks not in medals or monuments, but in bread and dignity."

A Frontier Family

Benjamin and Jenny Grimes married in 1778, as the Revolution still raged. Together they raised ten children—James, Robert, Samuel, Margaret, Thomas, Sarah, John, Rosey, Presay, and Benjamin Jr.—whose names trace the migration of the family from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, into the bluegrass lands of Kentucky.

In 1813, Benjamin drafted his will in Nicholas County. It was a humble document—no grand estates, only love and responsibility. Each child received a token fifty cents; his wife was granted use of their property "so long as she remain my widow." His son James Ishmael was named executor, entrusted to see the old soldier's final wishes done.

Benjamin's life was not one of wealth, but of endurance—an American story told not in fortunes but in freedom earned and passed down.

Kentucky's Quiet Pioneer

After the war, Benjamin joined the migration of veterans who crossed the Appalachians seeking fertile soil and a new beginning. By the early 1800s, he was part of the tide that turned Kentucky from wilderness into farmland and settlements.

Nicholas County, where he settled, was then a raw frontier of log cabins, cornfields, and the echo of Indian trails. He lived there through the founding of the state, the War of 1812, and the dawn of the new century.

When he died in 1822, aged eighty-six, his grave was likely marked by a simple stone, now long vanished—but his name endures in the DAR Patriot Index (A060671), confirming him as one of Pennsylvania's sons who helped win the Revolution.

Legacy and Lineage

From the stone chimneys of Pennsylvania to the rolling fields of Kentucky, Benjamin Russell Ishmael's story mirrors that of the nation itself—born in struggle, tested in war, and rooted in perseverance.

His descendants carried the family westward: into Ohio, Missouri, and Colorado, where the bloodline of soldiers and pioneers continued through the Howe and Wright families—eventually joining the heritage of The Wright Line.

In every generation since, one can trace echoes of that same endurance—the quiet will of a man who marched for independence and built a life from its promise.

Primary Sources

Pension Record, Pennsylvania Line, enrolled October 1, 1818 (NARA Revolutionary Pensions)

DAR Patriot Index A060671 – Benjamin Russell Ishmael

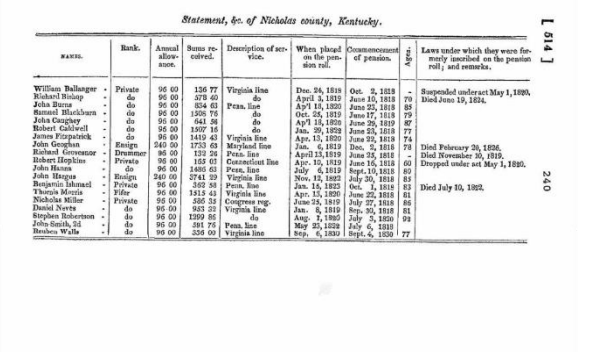
Nicholas County, Kentucky Will Book B, p. 148 – Will dated November 13, 1813

Marriage Record, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, 1778 (Benjamin Ishmael & Elizabeth Grimes)

Genealogical Abstracts, Pennsylvania and Kentucky Settler Records

Epilogue

"He was a man of no great fame, but of great faith—one who answered when liberty called, and who left the earth freer than he found it."



Statement, &c. of Nicholas county, Kentucky.

[514]

NAMES.	Rank.	Annual allowance.	Sums received.	Description of service.	When placed on the pension rol.	Commencement of pension.	Ages.	Laws under which they were formerly inscribed on the pension roll; and remarks.
William Ballanger	Private	96 00	136 77	Virginia line	Dec. 24, 1818	Oct. 2, 1818	-	Suspended underact May 1, 1820.
Richard Bishop	do	96 00	378 60	do	April 3, 1819	June 16, 1818	79	Died June 19, 1824.
John Burns	do	96 00	854 61	Penn. line	Ap'l 15, 1820	June 25, 1818	89	
Samuel Blackburn	do	96 00	1308 76	do	Oct. 25, 1819	June 17, 1818	79	
John Caughey	do	96 00	641 56	do	Ap'l 15, 1820	June 25, 1819	87	
Robert Caldwell	do	96 00	1207 16	do	Jan. 29, 1823	June 25, 1818	77	
James Fitzpatrick	do	96 00	1419 43	Virginia line	Apr. 15, 1820	June 25, 1818	74	
John Gaughan	Ensign	240 00	1733 63	Maryland line	Jan. 6, 1819	Dec. 2, 1816	73	Died February 26, 1826.
Richard Gorsuntor	Drummer	96 00	132 26	Penn. line	April 13, 1819	June 25, 1818	-	Died November 30, 1819.
Robert Hopkins	Private	96 00	153 01	Connecticut line	Apr. 15, 1819	June 16, 1818	60	Dropped under act May 1, 1820.
John Hanes	do	96 00	1486 63	Penn. line	July 6, 1819	Sept. 10, 1818	80	
John Hargus	Ensign	240 00	3741 29	Virginia line	Nov. 12, 1822	July 30, 1818	85	
Benjamin Ishmael	Private	96 00	362 38	Penn. line	Jan. 15, 1823	Oct. 1, 1818	83	Died July 10, 1832.
Thomas Morris	Fifer	96 00	1315 43	Virginia line	Apr. 15, 1820	June 25, 1818	81	
Nicholas Miller	Private	96 00	826 33	Congress reg.	June 23, 1819	July 27, 1818	86	
Daniel Neves	do	96 00	983 23	Virginia line	Jan. 6, 1819	Sep. 30, 1818	81	
Stephen Robertson	do	96 00	1269 86	do	Aug. 7, 1820	July 2, 1820	93	
John Smith, 2d	do	96 00	891 76	Penn. line	May 25, 1822	July 6, 1818	-	
Reuben Wells	do	96 00	336 00	Virginia line	Sep. 6, 1830	Sept. 4, 1830	77	

240

Figure 11.

U.S., The Pension Roll of 1835 for Benjamin Ishmael

Family Line Connection

Through Benjamin Russell Ishmael, the family's Revolutionary spirit endured—quiet, steadfast, and deeply rooted in the soil of early America. His service in the Pennsylvania Line and his later life in Kentucky represented the frontier's steady rhythm: hardship met with perseverance, faith tempered by endurance. The Ishmael descendants carried that same determination westward, their lines eventually entwining with the Kilgore and Gaff families—other patriots who bore arms in the Revolution and built lives in the wake of independence.

Over the generations, those bloodlines spread through Ohio and into the Great Plains, their stories merging in the heartland where the Wright and Scott families would later rise. What began with Benjamin's musket and the promise of liberty would echo in later generations who wore new uniforms, crossed new frontiers, and preserved the same devotion to service. The line from Benjamin Russell Ishmael to James Lenox Gaff, and onward to the Wrights of Kansas and Colorado, marks not only the passage of blood but the continuity of courage.

CHAPTER 12:

James Lenox Gaff (1755–1833)

From Falkirk to Freedom: A Scottish Soldier in the American Revolution

Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Scotland — autumn 1755. In a land of rolling glens and iron forges, a boy named James Lenox Gaff was born into a world of craftsmen, farmers, and tradesmen. Scotland was still rebuilding from the Jacobite rebellions, its sons scattering across the Atlantic in search of stability and land. In the 1770s, as the American colonies stirred toward independence, young James joined that tide of migration. He crossed the sea not yet a soldier, but a wanderer seeking purpose.

Across the Sea to a New War

By his early twenties, Gaff was in the American colonies — possibly Pennsylvania or Virginia — where the talk of rebellion filled taverns and meeting houses. The Continental Congress had declared independence, and in 1777, James enlisted in Grayson's Additional Continental Regiment, one of sixteen elite units raised to

reinforce George Washington's army. His muster record of June 14, 1777, lists him as Sergeant, a post earned by ability and reliability.

Grayson's Regiment, organized under Colonel William Grayson of Virginia, was no ordinary militia. It was part of the Continental Line, the professional core of Washington's army. In that fateful year, the British pressed south from New York to seize Philadelphia, and Grayson's men were drawn into the campaign that would define the war's middle years.

Campaign of 1777: Brandywine and Germantown

When Washington met General Howe's British troops along the Brandywine Creek on September 11, 1777, the air was thick with smoke and confusion. Grayson's Regiment fought hard on the right flank, helping to stabilize collapsing lines. Though the Americans retreated, their discipline under fire preserved the army. Three weeks later, on October 4, Washington struck back at Germantown—a daring assault through fog and smoke. Gaff's

regiment advanced under heavy fire, a testament to the courage of men who fought for an idea as much as survival.

Both Captain David Kilgore's 8th Pennsylvania Regiment and Sergeant James Lenox Gaff's Grayson's Regiment took part in these same campaigns. Kilgore commanded a company of Pennsylvania men; Gaff, a Scotsman serving under Virginia's banner. Their regiments fought on separate wings but within the same army, under the same general orders, likely encamped within miles of each other.

Decades later, in peace, those two soldiers' lives would intersect again — when James married Kilgore's daughter, Elizabeth Kilgore (1770–1816).

From Revolution to Family

After the war closed in 1783, James rooted himself in Pennsylvania, a land he had helped defend. Around 1790–1792, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Captain David Kilgore and Sarah Mickey of Westmoreland County. The Kilgore homestead near Mount Pleasant had become a center of frontier life, and their

union symbolized a joining of two Revolutionary families — one from Scotland, one from the Pennsylvania frontier.

Together, James and Elizabeth raised a large family — Robert S. Gaff, John Gaff, Margaret (Drayton), and others who carried the family name into the next century.

Frontier Migration to Ohio

Like many early patriots, the Gaffs were drawn by the promise of new land in the Northwest Territory. By the turn of the 19th century, they had migrated to Stark County, Ohio, near the small settlement that would become Canton. There James cleared fields, built a homestead, and worked the soil he had fought to free.

His years were steady and hardworking, marked by family, faith, and a quiet pride in what he and his generation had secured for those who followed.

Final Years and Resting Place

James Lenox Gaff Sr. died on August 23, 1833, at Canton, Stark County, Ohio, aged 77. His wife Elizabeth (sometimes recorded as Margaret Elizabeth) passed that same year. They rest side by side in West Lawn Cemetery, their graves still standing as silent witnesses to a shared life of endurance and legacy.

Legacy

From Falkirk's cobblestones to Pennsylvania's battlefields to Ohio's frontier, the journey of James Lenox Gaff spanned the birth of a nation.

He was a Scottish immigrant turned Continental soldier, a Revolutionary patriot, and a pioneer settler whose descendants carried his bloodline westward — to Colorado, Utah, and beyond.

His marriage to Elizabeth Kilgore linked two lines of patriots, uniting the stories of Captain David Kilgore of the 8th Pennsylvania and Sergeant James L. Gaff of Grayson's Regiment — soldiers who likely shared the same campaign trails before becoming kin through marriage.

James's descendants, through the Scott, Wright, and Espinoza lines, continue to bear the mark of his courage — a legacy of service, faith, and family that began in the fight for liberty.

Primary Sources

Military Record:

Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783 (National Archives, NARA)

Muster Roll, Grayson's Additional Continental Regiment, June 14, 1777 — lists "James Gaff, Sergeant."

Service Confirmation:

DAR Patriot Index, Volume II – Gaff, James Lenox, A044613

Rank: Sergeant, Regiment: Grayson's Regiment (Continental Line), State: Virginia

Related Service Records:

Captain David Kilgore – 8th Pennsylvania Regiment, 1776–1778 (Pennsylvania Archives, Series 5, Vol. 3)

Cemetery Record:

West Lawn Cemetery, Canton, Stark County, Ohio – James and Elizabeth Gaff, interred 1833.

Family Sources:

Gaff–Kilgore family records; Pennsylvania and Ohio censuses (1790–1830); Find A Grave Memorial ID 153044821

Family Line Connection:

When the guns of revolution fell silent, the family turned to peace and the building of new communities. Generations later, Merle Scott, a sailor and survivor of the U.S.S. President Lincoln, carried forward that same quiet courage into the 20th century.

Chapter 13:

Merle Scott: Survivor of the U.S.S. President Lincoln

"They that go down to the sea in ships,

That do business in great waters;

These men see the works of the Lord,

And His wonders in the deep."

— Psalm 107:23–24

The Early Years

Merle Scott, the third son of Lee and Matilda Scott, was born on November 17, 1896, in Greenleaf, Kansas. Raised on the rolling plains of Washington County, Merle grew up in a family of strong work ethic and quiet resilience. He attended the local school in Greenleaf before completing his education at Waterville High School, graduating with the Class of 1916—just as the winds of war began sweeping across the globe.

To the Sea

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, twenty-year-old Merle answered the call. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy, joining the crew of the U.S.S. President Lincoln, a massive troop transport originally built for the Hamburg American Line in 1907. Once a German ocean liner, the Lincoln was seized by the U.S. after America declared war on Germany and converted into one of the first transport ships capable of carrying over 5,000 troops across the Atlantic.

After sea trials off the New Jersey coast, the Lincoln began her wartime service in October 1917, ferrying American soldiers of the famed Rainbow Division to France. Merle, among her crew of 700, saw the towering skyline of New York fade on the horizon as the ship steamed toward a world at war.

The Voyage and the Final Crossing

From October 1917 through May 1918, the President Lincoln completed four successful crossings of the Atlantic, braving the threat of German U-boats that haunted the convoy lanes. Her fifth

voyage began on May 19, 1918, carrying the 106th Infantry, 27th Division, toward the warfront in France.

The convoy reached Brest, France, on May 23, where the troops disembarked safely. But fate had one final test for the ship and her crew. On the morning of **May 31, 1918—Memorial Day—**the President Lincoln was steaming homeward, unescorted, about 600 miles off the French coast.

At 8:58 a.m., the German submarine U-90 struck. Three torpedoes ripped through the ship's hull. Within eighteen minutes, the proud liner was gone—her guns still firing, her flag still flying. Merle and his shipmates abandoned ship, enduring eighteen harrowing hours adrift on rafts and lifeboats before rescue arrived from the destroyers Warrington and Smith.

The survivors, exhausted but alive, were taken back to France and later returned home aboard the U.S.S. Great Northern. The President Lincoln lost three officers and twenty-three men in the attack. For Merle, the memory of that day—steel screaming, water surging, the faces of lost comrades—would remain forever.

Life After the Sea

Returning to Kansas, Merle built a new life far from the ocean that had nearly claimed him. On April 4, 1921, he married Hazel Davison in Waterville, Kansas. Together they raised three sons: Robert L., Donn, and an infant son who died at birth. Tragedy would later strike again when Robert passed away in 1967.

From 1924 to 1944, Merle was self-employed before taking over management of the McAlister Lumber and Hardware Store in Kirwin, Kansas, a position he held until his retirement in 1962. He became a respected figure in the community—a man of integrity, discipline, and quiet pride.

A Legacy of Service

Merle was active in the American Legion, serving faithfully for over fifty years and receiving an award for Meritorious Service. He also belonged to several Masonic orders, including Phillipsburg Lodge No. 184 A.F. & A.M., Hiram Commandery No. 51, and Kirwin Chapter No. 66.

When Merle passed away in December 1976, his funeral reflected a life of dignity and honor. Services were held at the Kirwin United Methodist Church, followed by Masonic rites and a military graveside ceremony at Riverside Cemetery in Waterville, where the flag of the nation he served was folded in his honor.

The Man Remembered

Merle Scott's story stands as one of survival and steadfastness. From the sinking of a torpedoed ship to a lifetime of service to his community, he embodied the virtues of courage, humility, and perseverance.

A Kansas farm boy who went to sea, he lived to tell the tale—and left behind a family proud to bear his name.

Figure 12.

Photo of Merle Scott in Navy uniform

Family Line Connection:

The legacy of service continued in the Scott family through Major J. Scott — a man whose leadership and dedication reflected the enduring values of those who came before him. His life stands as a final link in this long chain of American service and perseverance.

Chapter 14:

Major J. Scott: Civil War Veteran and Patriarch of the Scott Line

Major J. Scott was born on July 14, 1827, in Union Town, Pennsylvania, into a large frontier family that traced its roots through the industrious heart of early America. He was the third of fifteen children—strong, self-reliant, and accustomed to the rhythms of both hardship and hope that defined the era. Like so many of his generation, his life would bridge the great American divides: East to West, war to peace, and the passage from rural frontier life to a more modern nation.

As a young man, he moved westward with his parents to Ohio, joining the wave of settlers who left Pennsylvania's crowded valleys for the open promise of new farmland in the Buckeye State. It was in Ohio that he met Amanda Gaff, daughter of James Lenox Gaff, a Scottish-born Revolutionary descendant whose family shared the same pioneering spirit. The two were married on October 14, 1849, in Marion, Ohio—a union that would unite the proud Gaff and Scott lines for generations to come.

Service in the Civil War

When war tore the nation apart in 1861, J. Scott was thirty-four years old—mature, steady, and already a husband and father. Though not among the earliest enlistees, by 1864 he joined the cause of Union preservation, commissioning as First Lieutenant, Company G, 166th Ohio Infantry. This regiment was part of the Ohio National Guard, organized to serve for one hundred days—a brief but critical period that freed veteran Union troops to fight on the front lines while the Ohioans guarded vital railroads, bridges, and supply depots across Virginia and Washington, D.C.

From May to September 1864, the 166th Ohio Infantry performed garrison duty around Washington and Alexandria, part of the great defensive ring that repelled Confederate raids during General Early's campaign. Though their time in service was short, it came at a turning point in the war: Grant's Overland Campaign had begun, and the nation's fate hung in the balance. J. Scott's regiment helped hold the Union's lifeline together as the Army of the Potomac advanced toward Richmond.

After mustering out in the autumn of 1864, he returned home to Waterville, Ohio. His military title "Major," which appears in

later records and local memory, was one of respect—a community recognition of his leadership and service. He embodied the quiet honor of a man who did his duty and returned to rebuild.

Life After War

The postwar years saw great change. Like many veterans, Major Scott turned his eyes westward, toward Kansas, where new towns were forming and railroads promised opportunity. By the 1870s, he and Amanda had settled in Waterville, Kansas, joining other Ohio families seeking fresh soil and a new beginning. He became a respected pioneer of Greenleaf and Waterville, known for his integrity, generosity, and the values that carried him through war and hardship.

Together, Major and Amanda raised a large family. Their children included:

Wayne Scott, a miner and prospector who later ventured to Colorado's high country;

Lee Scott, who would carry the family name into Kansas's next generation;

Ruth (Scott) Campbell of Chicago;

Mary (Scott) Durham;

and daughters Bell Bryan and Bessie McCormack, along with Wm. Scott of Waterville and John V. Scott of Kansas City, Missouri.

Their home became a center of stability and moral example—a gathering place for children and grandchildren that reflected the sturdy bond between the Scotts and the Gaffs. By the time of his passing, Major Scott counted 19 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren, his legacy stretching across the plains like the horizon he once crossed in youth.

Final Years and Passing

Major J. Scott lived to an extraordinary age for his time—90 years—passing away on January 5, 1918, at his home in Waterville, Kansas. His life had spanned from the age of horse-drawn wagons to the dawn of the automobile, from the wooden musket to the modern rifle, from frontier cabins to electric lights.

His obituary, printed in the Waterville Telegraph, spoke plainly but respectfully of a man who had "answered his final call," having served his country and his community with distinction. The funeral was held at his home, with Reverend C. S. Powell officiating. He was laid to rest in the local cemetery beside Amanda, who had preceded him, their resting place shaded by Kansas oaks and watched over by generations who followed.

Legacy

Major J. Scott's legacy lives not only in the historical record but in the values carried forward by his descendants. His son Wayne Scott would journey west to the mining camps of Colorado; his grandson Frank Wright would drive the rails for the Denver & Rio Grande; and his great-grandson Wayne Scott Wright would shape the next century in Colorado's mesas and orchards.

From the Revolution to the railroads, from the Civil War to the Great War, the line he helped anchor continued its march through American history. Major J. Scott's life was a bridge between those eras—a man of duty, family, and faith who served his country when called and built its heartland when the guns went silent.

Primary Sources:

Waterville Telegraph, January 1918 – "Death of Major J. Scott"

Civil War Service: NARA Roll for Co. G, 166th Ohio Infantry

Marriage Record: Ohio Marriages, 1803–1900 (Union County)

Family Oral History and Greenleaf Historical Society archives

Chapter 15:

"How I Won the War"

Lt. Colonel Franklin Benjamin Wright, Jr. (Ret.)

U.S. Army Air Forces, WWII & Korean War

Compiled by Dwight Cline

Franklin Benjamin Wright, Jr. was born into a family whose roots ran deep in the soil of Colorado and Kansas. Like many young men of his generation, he came of age in the shadow of the Great Depression and found himself swept into the storm of global war. His story, preserved here in his own words, offers not just the record of a soldier, but the reflections of a man who lived through one of history's most defining eras.

Early Enlistment

"I enlisted in the army the day after the draft bill was signed into law, September 17, 1940. A friend and I used to meet for coffee on our way to work and he suggested we enlist, so we did. By noon we

were both signed up, and at eight that evening we were on our way to Fort Ord, California."

So began Frank's forty-year journey in military service. What started as an impulsive act of patriotism became a lifelong vocation. The Army was unprepared for the flood of volunteers that poured in that autumn, and the men found themselves housed in tents, wearing leftover uniforms from the First World War.

At first, Frank was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 53rd Infantry, 7th Division. Basic training was rugged and improvised, but he thrived. Within months he was a sergeant, responsible for men scarcely younger than himself.

From Infantry to the Air Corps

"I guess I had been in about eight months when the Air Corps started recruiting, and Jimmie—my friend—suggested we transfer. I agreed, even though I was a sergeant by then and had to transfer as a private."

Frank's transfer brought him to Moffett Field, California, where he drilled recruits and eventually served as a military policeman. When war broke out in December 1941, he was on night duty at the gate. "We heard it over the radio," he recalled, "and sat there wondering what now." Within hours, the base went on full alert, and Frank was patrolling the perimeter in a motorcycle sidecar armed with a .30-caliber machine gun.

Training, Transfers, and Transition

The months that followed were a restless blur—Fort Ord, Monterey, Chico, and Nashville—where Frank advanced to staff sergeant and volunteered for glider pilot training.

"We flew 65-horsepower Cubs, Taylorcrafts, and Aeronicas. They could land almost anywhere, and one time I had to land in a cow pasture. They were really fun to fly."

When the glider program ended abruptly due to high casualty rates, he was reassigned to aviation cadet training and later to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he trained in the PT-13 biplane.

"Those instructors must have been pretty sturdy fellows. We learned loops, barrel rolls, snap rolls, and split-esses. Anyone who couldn't do them was washed out."

Frank persevered, earned his wings, and transitioned to fighter reconnaissance—the dangerous work of flying alone or in pairs over enemy lines to photograph German positions.

Combat in Europe

Frank arrived in Europe in August 1944, shortly after D-Day. He was assigned to the 160th Squadron, 363rd Group, 9th Tactical Air Command, flying the legendary P-51 Mustang.

"Our purpose was to search for targets of opportunity and call in the fighter-bombers. We could join in the strafing if the flight leader agreed, but that rarely happened."

Flying low and fast over France, Belgium, and Germany, his missions were a blend of nerve and precision. Anti-aircraft fire was constant; Frank's plane was hit more than once.

"The most dangerous time was when we had to fly in a straight line to take pictures. We generally flew at about 5,000 feet, but if clouds were lower, we flew below them. That's when evasive action really became critical."

He earned multiple Air Medals—awarded for every five missions flown—pinned on by his commanding officer, Colonel John McNabb. Frank's work in tactical reconnaissance directly supported Allied ground operations from Normandy through the Battle of the Bulge.

The War's End

When the war in Europe wound down, Frank transferred to twin-engine training on the C-47 and volunteered for a planned invasion of Japan.

"I was in a convoy headed for Marseille when the bomb was dropped, so that training never took place."

He stayed in France for two months, living near Marseille and exploring a world slowly returning to peace. The war had given him wings—but also cost him youth, friends, and simplicity.

After the War

Frank continued his career in the U.S. Air Force, later serving during the Korean War as a logistics officer. He retired as a Major and earned an impressive list of decorations, including five Bronze Stars and the Legion of Merit.

He settled in Tooele, Utah, where he lived a long and thoughtful life. His obituary, published in the Tooele Transcript Bulletin in August 2011, captured the man behind the medals:

"Frank was a retired Major in the United States Army and a veteran of World War II as a fighter pilot; Korean War as a logistics officer. He was awarded five Bronze Stars, Legion of Merit, and several other commendations.

He was a devoted father and grandfather, generous to a fault, always tried to do his best and what was right, was very intelligent and never stopped his lifelong quest for knowledge. He loved nature and believed in the natural order of life."

Epilogue

In his final reflections, Frank wrote not of glory but of gratitude—for survival, for comrades, for the chance to serve. His humor, humility, and quiet pride are the hallmarks of a generation that did what needed to be done without complaint.

Dwight Cline, who corresponded with him during his later years, wrote simply:

"Uncle Frank and I emailed back and forth for a time while he still lived in Grand Junction. After he moved back to Utah, we lost touch. I'm glad we were able to document all of this."

And thanks to that correspondence, the Wright family—and all who read this—will always remember how Uncle Frank won the war.

Figure 13.

Lt. Colonel Franklin Benjamin Wright, Jr

.Family Line Connection:

Across three centuries — from the Revolution to the modern age — the Wright and Scott families have remained bound by a shared creed: faith, service, and endurance. Their stories, both ordinary and extraordinary, form not just a genealogy, but a living testament to the American spirit.

Epilogue:

The Circle of Return

Across two and a half centuries, this lineage has followed the restless course of the American story—through wilderness and war, migration and settlement, silence and rediscovery. From the rifle smoke at Saratoga to the fields of Kansas, from the high plains of Colorado to the mesas of New Mexico, the Wright and Scott families—and the names that joined them, Ishmael, Gaff, Kilgore, Calloway, and others—have carried forward an enduring legacy of courage and endurance.

Each chapter in this book represents more than the life of a single ancestor; it is a link in an unbroken chain. Their journeys were not isolated tales, but converging paths—crossing through love, duty, faith, and loss—each generation shaping the next. They left homesteads and farms, court records and headstones, but they also left something less tangible: the call to remember, to trace our steps back to the beginning, and to listen for the voices that once spoke our names.

The modern descendants of these families walk now in a world far removed from the one that birthed their story. Yet the same spirit that led Benjamin Ishmael into the Revolution, James Lenox Gaff across the Atlantic, and Benjamin Franklin Wright into the Kansas frontier lives on in those who still ask where they come from. Every search through an archive, every faded photograph, every rediscovered grave is an act of reunion—a quiet homecoming across time.

In gathering these histories, we return not only to our ancestors, but to ourselves. The road back to San Ildefonso, to the valleys and mesas of our beginnings, is not a single path but a circle—a journey that leads us home.

Closing Note

This book began as a search for names and dates, but it became something far more profound—a conversation across generations. Each discovery, each record, each photograph helped illuminate the people behind the lineage: their choices, their resilience, their humanity.

May this work stand as both a memorial and an invitation—to remember, to question, and to continue the search. For family history is never truly finished; it only waits for the next storyteller to listen, to write, and to carry the line forward.

— Compiled by Bobby Espinoza

Appendix A: Family Line Summary

Condensed Genealogical Overview Compiled by Bobby C. Espinoza (2025)

The Wright Line: A Direct Descent

This summary outlines the major ancestral progression that forms the heart of *The Wright Line*, connecting Revolutionary War patriots, Civil War veterans, frontier pioneers, and twentieth-century heroes.

1. **Benjamin Franklin Wright (1835–1869)**
Union soldier, 6th Tennessee Infantry; died from war-related illness in Arkansas. Married **Martha Jane Howe (1845–1914)**, whose family ties reach Revolutionary soldier **William Maricy Howe**. Their children include:
    - **Benjamin Franklin Wright Jr. (1863–1945)** – Patriarch of the modern Wright line, educator, and early Colorado settler.
    - **John Wesley Wright (1868–1907)** – Harness maker, Kansas tradesman.
2. **Paul Wesley Wright (1893–1986)**
Son of Benjamin Jr.; early NCAA ski coach, inducted into the Helms Athletic Hall of Fame (1970). Married **Bessie Lucille Hurst**, descendant of Revolutionary soldier **Joseph Hurst**.
3. **Wayne Scott Wright (1914–2002)**
Son of Paul Wesley Wright; Colorado farmer and WWII veteran. Married **Judith Arlene Scott**, linking the Wrights to the Scotts of Kansas.
4. **Judith Arlene Wright (1940–)**
Daughter of Wayne Scott Wright and Bertha Scott.

Married into the Espinoza family, continuing the heritage line into New Mexico and Colorado.

5. **Bobby Clayton Espinoza (Author)**
Descendant and historian; compiler of *The Wright Line* and SAR member (National #216565), tracing ten documented patriot ancestors.

Revolutionary War Patriots

Patriot	Rank / Service	Engagements	Proven Line	DAR / SAR Reference
Captain David Kilgore	8th Pennsylvania Regiment	Brandywine, Germantown	Kilgore → Gaff → Howe → Wright	SAR #216565
Dudley Callaway	5th Virginia Regiment, Morgan's Rifles	Saratoga	Callaway → Trent → Howe	Pension 1819
Charles LeCompte	Virginia Militia, Clark's Campaign	Kaskaskia, Vincennes, Piqua	LeCompte → Coons → Howe	DAR A068370
Benjamin Russell Ishmael	Pennsylvania Line	Valley Forge	Ishmael → Howe → Wright	DAR A060671
James Lenox Gaff, Sr.	Grayson's Regiment	Philadelphia Campaign	Gaff → Howe → Wright	Muster 1777

Family Motto

"To remember is to honor; to record is to preserve."

This lineage stands as a record of resilience, service, and continuity — a living memorial to generations who shaped both their country and their descendants.

Appendix B: Research Methods and Documentation

Compiled by Bobby C. Espinoza (2025)

This book was researched and written using both primary and secondary sources gathered across more than a decade of genealogical and archival work. Every story, date, and citation within *The Wright Line* was verified through official records whenever possible, and cross-referenced against multiple data sets to ensure accuracy and historical integrity.

Primary Sources

1. **National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)** — Compiled Military Service and Pension Files, including:
    - *NARA M392 roll 6*: Henry Clay Harman
    - *NARA M392 roll 16*: Benjamin Franklin Wright
    - *Pension File S.42018*: Joseph Hurst
2. **DAR and SAR Records** — Official Patriot Indexes and verified lineages for the descendants of Charles LeCompte, David Kilgore, Benjamin Russell Ishmael, Dudley Callaway, and others.
3. **State and County Archives** — Marriage, census, and probate files from Tennessee, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, and Kentucky.
4. **G.A.R. and Legion Records** — Grand Army of the Republic Post 134, Greenleaf, KS, and American Legion Post 184, Kirwin, KS.
5. **Local Historical Collections** — Mesa County Oral History Project (CO), Gunnison Pioneer Museum, Hinsdale County Historical Society (CO).

Secondary Sources

- Family letters, diaries, and oral histories recorded by descendants of the Wright, Scott, Hurst, and Harman families.
- Published genealogies and academic histories including *George Rogers Clark and His Men* (Harding, 1907) and the *Pennsylvania Archives Series 5*.
- Cemetery and church records, digitized census indexes, and verified Ancestry.com image sources.

Methodology

Each ancestor was documented through a three-step process:

1. **Verification** — Every event (birth, marriage, death, and military service) was corroborated through at least two independent records or contemporary sources.
2. **Contextualization** — Historical context was added from military campaign reports, county histories, and period publications to restore the human story behind each record.
3. **Narrative Reconstruction** — Where the official record ended, oral testimony and regional history were woven together to recreate the family's journey through America's frontier and wars.

Preservation and Future Access

All genealogical files, original scans, and certified copies of records are preserved in the Wright–Espinoza Family Archive

(2025 edition). Digital copies are housed with the compiler and registered through the Sons of the American Revolution and Daughters of the American Revolution patriot databases.

"History is not a story of the past —it is a record of those who refused to be forgotten."

Acknowledgments:

This work could not have been completed without the shared memory, effort, and generosity of many hands and hearts. To the descendants who opened family trunks, shared photographs, and offered stories that might otherwise have been lost—thank you. Every letter, record, and recollection helped bring these ancestors home.

A special gratitude is owed to the Wright, Scott, Kilgore, and Montoya families, whose living members have carried these names with honor and care. Their willingness to preserve, question, and share ensured that the past would not fade into silence.

I also wish to thank the countless historians, archivists, and genealogists whose patient documentation—through local courthouses, church registers, military rolls, and tribal archives—made this work possible. Their quiet diligence is the bridge between memory and history.

Finally, to those who encouraged the telling of this story, and who reminded me that family history is not only about where we come from, but who we choose to remember—your belief gave this book its purpose.

—Bobby C. Espinoza

About the Author:

Bobby C. Espinoza is a descendant of ranch hands, miners, railroad men, soldiers, and survivors who moved through Tennessee, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and Texas between the 1700s and the late 1900s.

He has documented direct lines from Revolutionary War riflemen and frontier captains, to Union cavalry sergeants who died of disease in the Civil War, to a World War I sailor pulled from the Atlantic after his ship was torpedoed, to a World War II reconnaissance pilot flying P-51s over France, to uranium and highway work in the Rockies, to a Texas birth certificate in 1940.

He is a researcher of family military service and frontier migration, and a compiler of original oral history from living relatives. The Wright Line is his first full-length lineage narrative, created so his children — and theirs — will know exactly whose blood they carry.